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ABSTRACT

Multiple sources predict that the next generation of high school graduates is likely to have more severe emotional and physical problems than any previous generation. As their needs have intensified with complaints of stress, violent outbursts, thoughts of suicide, and feelings of malaise, so has their need for counseling. Students attending college will arrive on campus with very high expectations for personalized service. This paper suggests that technology can assist the counseling profession in meeting the challenges presented by these students. Examples of new technology that can assist include computerized data management of records to help track clients from intake through follow-up, biofeedback equipment to assist students in dealing with stress, and internet home pages for information sources. The paper also considers the ethical and confidentiality issues that have been created by the use of technological services. (JDM)

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NEW DIRECTIONS FOR RELATING IN A GLOBAL COMMUNITY

HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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As we look toward 2010, changing demographics will affect planning efforts. Higher education futurists predict an acceleration of the demographic trends we are already experiencing: more students will be older, adult learners; more students will have a greater dependence on financial aid and scholarships; more students will not live on campus; more students of color will attend.

Multiple sources predict that the next generation of high school graduates is likely to have more severe emotional and physical problems than any previous generation. Increasing numbers of students will be chemically dependent or come from families with chemical dependency problems. They will have more difficulty making decisions, keeping commitments, and being responsible for their actions than today's college students. Students will be more likely to engage in violent behavior. Students and their families will also be more likely to be involved in litigation at the highest level. And they will arrive on campus with very high expectations for personalized service.

Potential enrollment growth for the foreseeable future will come from older, nontraditional students, students of color, and students who transfer from other institutions. By 2050, African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans will make up 47 percent of the total population. Many of tomorrow's students will have full-time jobs and families, and convenience and attention to individual needs will be important factors in both recruitment and retention. Students will be very focused on career preparation and outcomes. And, because most students will have limited resources to pay for college, cost will be a very significant factor.

The Kellogg Foundation brought twenty five current or former presidents of state and land-grant colleges and universities together to provide guidance on how institutions of higher education might best respond to the unprecedented challenges -- and special opportunities -- offered by a radically changing world. The universities of the future will, necessarily, differ from present institutions in ways that scarcely can be imagined. Many institutions already are inventing tomorrow's university.

The Kellogg commissioners advise us to begin the process of changing by "returning to our roots" and placing students at the center of everything that we do. The commissioners challenge state and land-grant colleges to become genuine learning communities -- communities which are committed to quality instruction and to responding to the individual needs of all learners, anytime, anywhere. It will be important for colleges to keep student's needs regarding quality instruction, the availability of financial aid and scholarships, and personalized attention to their individual needs at the center of our plans as we prepared for a new century of service.

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NEED FOR COUNSELING SERVICES

Counseling needs for students have intensified and seem to be more intense and frequent than they were a few years ago -- complaints of stress, binge drinking, violent outbursts, thoughts of suicide, and a malaise of indifference and uncertainty. Newton (1998) shared observations about college students and their lives today as follows:

- Finding a social connection is an overriding and sometimes confusing concern of student life. Needs include references to loneliness, wanting to fit in and find friends, dealing with conflicts, and managing differences. Use of the Internet has added a new form of intimacy as students meet and connect via cyberspace.

- Life is like channel surfing: hundreds of choices and only seconds to decide. Students are experiencing a proliferation of decisions, including the choice of career, lifestyle, living location, and more. Students realize that the world is changing and the predictability of these changes cannot easily be forecast. Newton gives examples of the stock market crashing in Hong Kong and the New York Exchange immediately reacts. An international incident occurs, and within seconds CNN beams an on-site report. This can lead to uncertainly and anxiety for students.

- Students are experiencing an emotional roller coaster with intermittent periods of pressure followed by moments of escape and relief. Students are using a variety of escapes from the worries, deadlines, and decisions pressing them. Excessive alcohol or sleep are examples of trying to get their minds off the demands of school. Counselors report angry outbursts, antagonisms, and abusive behaviors are frequent, while irritation, frustration, and anger are rampant.

- Students look toward the surrounding world with an attitude of wariness and a need to look out for oneself. Isolation and disconnection from support are problems for many students, and suicide is on the increase. Students are sometimes embarrassed to seek support from the services that we provide, and can feel a sense of failure about needing such services. Our services have become more formal, bureaucratic and concerned about ethical or legal standards.

- Students are adopting a "live for today" philosophy. With students living in a world of overwhelming complexity, immediate changeability, and future uncertainty, their response has been to live for the moment and hope that the future will take care of itself.

USES OF TECHNOLOGY

Technology can assist our profession in meeting the challenges presented by our students, as described above. Examples of new technology include:

- Computerized data management of records to help track clients from intake to follow-up. This allows for analysis of data which can be used for an annual report that both summarizes facts and provides anecdotes of counseling service activity and client outcomes. Another technological innovation allows voice response medical dictation systems. Medical records can be scanned into the computer system, thus allowing files to be eliminated.

- State of the art computerized biofeedback equipment to assist students in dealing with stress.

- Internet home pages that can offer self-help topics that enable students, in the convenience of their own rooms, to use the Web to read about, listen to, and interact on issues such as stress management, getting a good night's sleep, and maintaining a healthy relationship.

- Access of research data for the professional staff in order to stay current on new practices and techniques.

- Use of list serves to find other current uses of technology.

- Interactive webpage questionnaires to gather research data from students and to assess outcome evaluations from users of counseling services.

It is important to remember, however, that technology also raises some serious ethical and confidentiality issues regarding email and transmissions. Questions arise such as "Who is accountable for helping someone who is communicating through e-mail? How can you be certain who you are treating?" Budget concerns must also be dealt with as technology is expensive and can be outdated almost as soon as it is purchased.

SHARING OF NEW IDEAS AND PROGRAMS

As counselors are struggling with providing the best support available to their clients, technology can be of great assistance. Participants of the International Counseling Conference could be linked through the creation of a list serve so that contact can be continued beyond the dates of the conference and the distance between colleagues. Sharing of web page addresses, on-line technology sources, collaboration on research or projects, creating outreach and consultation lists, and providing lists of workshops, staff development and training opportunities are all examples of how we could network with each other internationally.